



ROCKJUMPER

Worldwide Birding Adventures

Spain

Birds, Wine and Iberian Lynx

1st December to 12th December 2023 (12 days)



Iberian Lynx by Javi Eloraggia

Spain has long been a very popular birdwatching destination, offering a wide range of Mediterranean habitats along with safe, easy and excellent birding. Many sites are in beautifully scenic settings, featuring Romanesque architecture and ancient, fortified hilltop villages; whilst much of interior Spain that we visit is very rural and way off the tourist trail. Our itinerary is specially designed for a great diversity of birds and concentrates on two major and distinct habitats: the semi-arid steppes and cork-oak dehesas (a type of

wooded pastureland) of the central and northern interior and the Guadalquivir River with its associated wetlands and marshes feeding into the Gulf of Cádiz on the Atlantic Ocean. Top birds included White-headed and Marbled Ducks, Spanish Imperial and Bonelli's Eagles, Little and Great Bustards, Eurasian Eagle-Owl, Azure-winged Magpie and Black-bellied Sandgrouse.

The other major aspect of this tour is the wine and food, which will be extremely interesting and varied. Spain's wine-making tradition spans more than 2000 years and the country is producing wines of increasingly good quality. There are several excellent reds that we will get to enjoy and these days a few fabulous whites are also being made with traditional Spanish grapes.

Our tour ends in the beautiful Sierra de Andújar where time will be spent exploring this wonderful region in search of the most endangered feline on the planet – Iberian Lynx. We travel in spacious and comfortable vehicles; the food is delicious and plentiful; while our accommodations are extremely well-appointed and nestled in quiet and charming villages. A trip for those who love birds, amazing locations and the fine things in life!

THE TOUR AT A GLANCE...

THE ITINERARY

Day 1	Arrival in Madrid and transfer to Oropesa for wine tasting
Day 2	Oropesa to Monfrague National Park
Day 3	Visit to the Santa Marta Steppes and wine tasting in Trujillo
Day 4	Trujillo to El Rocio with afternoon wine tasting in El Rocio
Day 5	Full day in Doñana National Park
Day 6	Brazo del Este & Laguna de Medina with wine tasting in Jerez
Day 7	Full day in Bonanza and Trebujena with wine tasting in Trebujena
Day 8	Drive to Andújar and afternoon visit to Sierra de Andújar
Days 9 & 10	Sierra de Andújar and surrounds
Day 11	Andujar to Alcazar de San Juan with wine tasting in Valdepeñas
Day 12	Alcazar de San Juan to Madrid & departure



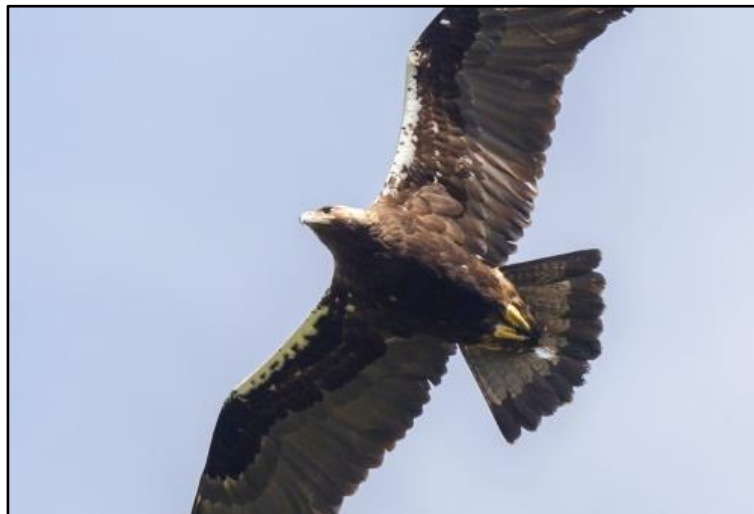
TOUR MAP



THE TOUR IN DETAIL...

Day 1: Arrival in Madrid and transfer to Oropesa for wine tasting. This morning has been set aside for arrival in Madrid. This afternoon we will depart Madrid for Oropesa, approximately an hour away.

Oropesa is a pleasant medieval town with a number of historic convents, monasteries, churches and palaces. This evening we'll enjoy our first Spanish wines. The region is famous for several varietals including Grenache, Syrah, Tempranillo and what is often regarded as the 'King' of the reds – Cabernet Sauvignon. Tomorrow we'll be heading to the beautiful Monfrague National Park.



Spanish Imperial Eagle by Yeray Seminario

Day 2: Oropesa to Monfrague National Park. This morning we head out to the scenic Monfrague National Park in the Extremadura region. En route to Monfrague NP there will be plenty of time for some great initial birding, allowing us to acquaint ourselves with many of the region's more common species, such as Spotless Starling, Eurasian Jay and European Serin, as well as specialties that may include Iberian Magpie and possibly Spanish Imperial Eagle, as we explore the park through the day. The Monfrague National Park, covering 18,000 hectares, was protected as a Natural Park from 1979 but only recently declared a National Park in 2007. There is an additional 11,700-hectare buffer zone, culminating in a vast area that is rich in wildlife. This fabulous region of mountains, gorges, forest and woodland holds Spain's major breeding sites for the rare Spanish Imperial Eagle and during our stay here, we will hope for daily sightings of this impressive species. The area is also home to the world's largest breeding colony of Cinereous Vulture. These huge birds are often visible throughout the region and can often be seen attending to goat or sheep carcasses, along with the more numerous Griffon Vulture.



Hawfinch by Adam Riley

Other birds that we'll be searching for during our time here include the impressive Eurasian Eagle-Owl, smartly plumaged Iberian Magpie, Black-winged Kite, Hawfinch, Sardinian Warbler and Spanish Sparrow. We will also make our first searches for Bonelli's Eagle and Great and Little Bustards. After a memorable first day in the field we will head to our accommodation for a delicious dinner.

Day 3: Visit to the Santa Marta Steppes and wine tasting in Trujillo. Today we depart our base in the early morning for the small village of Santa Marta de Magasca. The bird rich Santa Marta steppes, declared



a *Special Protection Area for Birds* in 1998, meander down gentle slopes to expansive plains, dehesa pastureland, plentiful wetlands and the occasional Cork Oak thicket of the Magasca which in turn attract an array of species including Crested Lark, Corn Bunting, Spanish Sparrow, Calandra Lark, Azure Magpie, Red Kite, Red-legged Partridge, Black-bellied Sandgrouse, Golden Eagle, Short-toed Eagle and Little and Great Bustards before heading on to Trujillo for lunch. Thereafter we will have time to visit a local wine cellar in the ancient, historic, fortified town. We will then settle into our accommodations in Trujillo, the perfect base for our exploration of the area, while the option for an after dark excursion will allow us to venture out to look for Western Barn Owl around the village.



Griffon Vulture by Yeray Seminario

Day 4: Trujillo to El Rocio with afternoon wine tasting in El Rocio. We depart Trujillo early this morning heading south toward the pilgrimage town of El Rocio and close to the neighboring UNESCO World Heritage Site; Parque Nacional de Doñana. En route we will have the opportunity to locate Cinereous Vulture, Griffon Vulture, Golden Eagle, Spanish Imperial Eagle, Red Kite and Bonelli's Eagle while also enjoying some of the region's finest wines.

Day 5: Full day in Doñana National Park. Positioned on a major migratory route between Europe and Africa; Doñana National Park represents an important site for more than half-a-million wintering waterfowl and waders attracted to the region by its abundant food supply and mild climate. Dominating the right bank of the Guadalquivir River at the estuary which feeds into the Gulf of Cádiz the reserve is a kaleidoscope of marshland, lagoons, sand dunes, scrubland and maquis shrubland which provides



Southern Spain scenery and Africa on the other side of the Strait by Yeray Seminario

refuge for five threatened bird species and supports one of the largest heronries in the Mediterranean region.

We will spend time scanning through the myriad of species in the hopes of locating Eurasian Wigeon, Marbled Duck, Greylag Goose, Squacco Heron, Purple Heron, Eurasian Stone-Curlew, Purple Gallinule, White Stork, Red-crested Pochard, White-headed Duck and Slender-billed Gull while also providing an important breeding site for



Marbled Duck, Red-knobbed Coot and Spanish Imperial Eagle among others. The Cork-Oak and Pine woodlands and interspersed scrubland also play host to Booted and Short-toed Eagles and the striking Azure-winged Magpie.

Day 6: Brazo del Este & Laguna de Medina with wine tasting in Jerez.

The following morning, we depart for Jerez stopping to visit Brazo del Este. This area represents the remnants of the eastern branch of the Guadalquivir River floodplain which has been dramatically affected by commercial activities upstream. Despite this, the river still passes through the region, with much of the associated natural vegetation intact, flanked by rice fields and various other agricultural crops, which supports a host of species including Booted Eagle, Squacco Heron, Black Stork, Glossy Ibis, Marbled Duck, Western Swamphen, Eurasian Penduline Tit and Bluethroat.



White-headed Duck by Yeray Seminario

Laguna de Medina, the largest lake of the region, will then provide us with further opportunities to find an array of waterfowl including the elusive White-headed Duck and Eurasian Coot, while Ferruginous Duck, Northern Shoveler, Northern Pintail, Water Rail, Black-headed and Yellow-legged Gull and Red-crested Pochard are also possible. The muddy shores also attract an array of waders including Little Stint and Curlew Sandpiper while raptors are well represented with Common Buzzard, Red Kite and Western Marsh Harrier regularly encountered.

Southern Spain is well known for producing one of the most famous wines in the world – Sherry, and on arrival in Jerez we will make our way to one of the areas fine local wineries. Essentially Sherry can only be made in one place and that is within the province of Cádiz. The area is often referred to as the Sherry



Short-eared Owl by Yeray Seminario

Triangle and lies in the area between Jerez de la Frontera, Puerto de Santa María and San Lucar de Barrameda. The soil here is key while the damp climate encourages the growth of the flor, which is a coat of yeast that forms on the aging wine and prevents it from oxidizing. Also, key is the solera system used to blend the different vintages. Jerez has roughly 10,000 hectares of vineyards, where the predominant grape is the Palomino, named after a 13th-century Spanish knight. In other areas Palomino grapes are barely worth taking notice of as the varietal is often prone to oxidation. In



the Sherry Triangle however things are very different and due to the magic combination of the soil and the prevailing humidity, which allows the growth of the protective flor yeast, Sherry acquires its exceptional dryness and earthy aroma.

Later, after our wine tasting, we will get to enjoy a Flamenco show, which highlights traditional Spanish dance and features singers and guitarists. Our time in Jerez will certainly be unforgettable!

Day 7: Full day in Bonanza and Trebujena with wine tasting in Trebujena. The Bonanza Salt Plants and the outskirts of Doñana National Park are among the less visited but most rewarding sites in the Doñana area. To visit this productive region, we will need to leave the hotel in the early morning in order to arrive at the best time of the day in terms of light and bird activity.

Near the mouth of the River Guadalquivir is the best place to look for the globally threatened and range-restricted White-headed Duck, as well as the uncommon Marbled Duck in the province of Cadiz. This is also an excellent place for waders, including Kentish Plover, Common Greenshank, Common Redshank, Ruff, Wood and Curlew Sandpipers, Black-tailed Godwit, Sanderling, Dunlin, Little Stint and Common Snipe. In addition, the salt pans here offer our best chances for seeing Lesser Short-toed Lark and Spectacled Warbler.

Some special raptors for the area are Western Osprey and the lovely Red Kite, as well as the possibility for Spanish Imperial Eagle that nests inside the national park. However, the most remarkable sight of the day will probably be a large breeding colony of Gull-billed Tern and the impressive numbers of Slender-billed Gull, Greater Flamingo and Eurasian Spoonbill that gather on occasions in the salt pans. There is also a chance for Caspian Tern, Purple Heron, Black Stork, Great Egret and Little Bittern. After a fantastic birding session, we will spend the latter part of the afternoon wine tasting in Trebujena.



Firecrest by Yeray Seminario



Great Spotted Woodpecker
by Yeray Seminario

Day 8: Drive to Andujar and afternoon visit to Sierra de Andújar. The morning will be dedicated to travelling as we depart the coast of Spain and head inland to Andújar and in particular; Sierra de Andújar, home to the Iberian Lynx, a species considered to be the most endangered feline in the world, with 70% of the population found in this stronghold. We will spend the afternoon searching for



our first views of this beautiful cat in this partially mountainous terrain. This will be our first opportunity for this beautiful species, and we have set aside a further two full days to explore this wonderful region.

Day 9 & 10: Sierra de Andújar and surrounds. The majestic Oak trees which blanket the valleys of Sierra Morena range in Sierra de Andújar will be our base for the next two days. The park represents Andalucía's best preserved and protected natural tracts of Mediterranean forest and scrubland. It is in this park that we will search for the Iberian Lynx while also allowing us the chance to locate other



Bearded Reedling by Adam Riley

noteworthy mammal species including Iberian Ibex, Mouflon and the southernmost Eurasian Wolf population. The Cork-Oak woodlands also support an incredible array of avian gems; Spanish Imperial Eagle is the main attraction while Golden Eagle, Bonelli's Eagle, Short-toed Eagle, Griffon, Cinereous and Egyptian Vultures, Eurasian Eagle-Owl, Black Wheatear, Blue Rock Thrush, Hawfinch, Rock Bunting, Cirl Bunting, Crested Tit, Firecrest, Short-toed Treecreeper, European Serin and Sardinian and Dartford Warblers can all be located while traversing this amazing park.

Day 11: Andujar to Alcazar de San Juan with wine tasting in Valdepeñas. We will spend the morning in Andújar as we attempt to connect with any species we may have missed while also attempting one last sighting of the Iberian Lynx. We will then depart Andújar to Valdepeñas for a wine tasting at a local cellar. We expect to arrive at our accommodations in Alcazar de San Juan in the late afternoon.



Little Owl by Yeray Seminario

Day 12: Alcazar de San Juan to Madrid & departure. If time permits, we will enjoy an early morning exploration of the Biosphere Reserve of La Mancha Húmeda, offering the opportunity to explore a network of "lagoons" in the arid region of Alcazar de San Juan. These wetlands provide refuge for Western Marsh Harrier, Common Shelduck, Gadwall, Mediterranean Gull, Black-tailed Godwit, Common Redshank, Ringed Plover and Kentish Plover while the surrounding agricultural land and gently undulating alluvial plains support Little Owl. From Alcazar de San Juan we will return to Madrid where our memorable tour will conclude.



FINANCIAL ARRANGEMENTS:

Tour dates, prices, single supplement rates, approximate flight costs and spaces available for this tour are displayed on our website. Please see under IMPORTANT NOTES below.

This includes:

- All meals from dinner on Day 1 to lunch on Day 12;
- Bottled water;
- All lodgings;
- Ground transportation;
- 4X4 vehicles for a drive in Doñana Natural Park for Iberian Lynx;
- Access to private estates to search for Iberian Lynx;
- Reserve entrance fees and permits;
- Local wines during dinners;
- All wine tastings;
- Flamenco show in Jerez;
- Extra activities as mentioned in the itinerary; and
- All guiding services (including tips for local guides and services).

The tour fee does not include:

- Visa fees;
- ANY flights;
- Any beverages except that stipulated above;
- Special gratuities;
- Telephone calls; and
- Laundry and other items of a personal nature.

Single Supplement:

The single supplement cost for this tour will be charged if you wish to have single accommodation. If RBL cannot provide you with a rooming partner for these nights although you choose to share, the single supplement will become applicable. We will make all reasonable efforts to ensure that a rooming partner is found if you do wish to share.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

a) Due to constantly fluctuating exchange rates, we quote our tours in 4 currencies. The tour price is however fixed only in the currency printed in bold, and the actual cost in the other currencies listed will be adjusted according to prevailing exchange rates at the time of final invoicing (usually 4 months before the tour.) The same applies to approximate flight and single supplement rates, which are also quoted in the respective fixed currency.

b) Rates are based upon group tariffs; if the tour does not have sufficient registration a small party supplement will have to be charged.

c) Furthermore, these costs are subject to unforeseen increases in tour related costs and may have to be adjusted as a result.

d) Lastly, we may be forced to change or alter the itinerary and / or the designated Rockjumper leader/s at short or no notice due to unforeseen circumstances; please be aware that we will attempt to adhere as close to the original program as possible.



Tipping:

As noted above, gratuities (drivers, hotel staff, restaurants etc.) are included on this tour. However, this does NOT include your Rockjumper leader/s. If, therefore, you feel that he/they have given you excellent service, it is entirely appropriate to tip them.

Special Notes:

- It is important for the comfort of your fellow travellers that you do not over-pack. Kindly stick to 20kg (44 lb) for check in luggage and 8kg (+-18 lb) for hand luggage.
- Fitness: this tour does not require a high level of fitness, but participants should be in good general health. Should you have any physical limitations, please notify us in advance of departure.
- Accommodation throughout the trip is of a generally high standard and the hotels and resorts that we make use of are very comfortable. There is no camping on this trip.

ARRIVAL and DEPARTURE DETAILS:

This tour **does not** include **ANY** airfares. Madrid is the arrival city for this tour. The morning of day 1 has been set aside for arrivals, and the tour will depart at approximately 14:00 with a group transfer to Oropesa. Please kindly arrive in advance of this time or preferably arrive the day before. The tour will conclude by mid-afternoon in Madrid on day 12.

The above information in respect of arrivals and departures is a guide only. Precise arrival and departure information will be sent to you in your **Tour Confirmation** package once the tour has been officially confirmed. If you wish to arrive early and/or depart late and would like assistance in this regard, kindly contact the Rockjumper office.

FLIGHTS:

Madrid-Barajas International Airport, Madrid (IATA: MAD) is the main port of entry and exit for flights on this tour. It is well serviced by most of the world's major airlines. **Please DO NOT book any flights until you have consulted the Rockjumper office for confirmation on the status of the tour.**

